

INVESTMENT, ENTERPRISE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
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Agenda Item 4

*From decisions to actions – Investment and enterprise development as
catalysts for accomplishing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:
(b) Enterprise and information for Sustainable Development Goals*

Enterprise Development as Catalyst for SDGs Delivery

Speaking Points

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD.

- Enterprise development is a bedrock for achieving the SDGs, in particular for eliminating poverty and ensuring sustainable growth. Governments play a key role in creating an enabling regulatory environment to unleash the potential of entrepreneurship and MSMEs.
- The UN System recognizes this potential. UN General Assembly resolutions – 67/202 of 2012 and 69/210 of 2014 – recognized the importance of entrepreneurship to advance sustainable development. In 2016 the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/221 in which it “Reiterates the need to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. The Resolution emphasizes the importance of “improved regulatory environments and policy initiatives to promote entrepreneurship”. It calls upon UN organizations, in particular UNCTAD, to continue supporting Member States in the formulation, implementation and assessment of coherent policy measures on entrepreneurship and the promotion of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises.
- The key entry points for UNCTAD to promote enterprise development for achieving SDGs are entrepreneurship development and business facilitation. UNCTAD’s long established programmes in these two areas have generated significant impact over the past years.
- UNCTAD established the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF) in 2012. The Framework serves as a guide for countries to formulate entrepreneurship policies in line with sustainable development objectives. The EPF presents policy options in six priority areas, namely formulating a strategy, optimizing the regulatory environment, enhancing education and skills development, improving access to finance, facilitating technology exchanges and innovation, and promoting awareness and networks. It encompasses the entire policymaking cycle – from mapping the entrepreneurial ecosystem, to monitoring and evaluating implementation. We also developed a Policy Guide for Youth Entrepreneurship, in collaboration with the Commonwealth secretariat.
- Based on the EPF, UNCTAD has designed a project to support six developing countries (Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, The Gambia and Tanzania) – funded through the UN Development Account – to design and implement effective policies to promote entrepreneurship and create an enabling environment in which entrepreneurship can flourish.
- National workshops in each of the six target countries helped policy makers to assess the entrepreneurial ecosystem (including the development of a scorecard), and develop national entrepreneurship strategies and action plans for their implementation. Regional workshops in Africa and Latin America brought together practitioners and representatives from other countries to share experience, best practice and lessons learnt that could be replicated at the regional level.
- Complementing the policy work, UNCTAD’s Empretec programme facilitates the practical component of training entrepreneurs on the ground. Since the inception of Empretec 29 years ago, UNCTAD has trained more than 400,000 entrepreneurs in 40 countries. Innovative programmes to foster entrepreneurship among the youth are pursued. These include YouthConnekt Africa (co-organized by UNCTAD, UNDP and the Government of Rwanda) or the Start-up for SDGs event organized in Geneva last week (in collaboration with Youth Business International, the Politecnico of Milano, WIPO and Impact Hub Geneva).

- The other dimension of UNCTAD's work in the area of enterprise development for achieving the SDGs is our business facilitation programme. By reforming policies, simplifying regulation and administrative procedures and making these easily available, governments can establish a business environment in which entrepreneurial activity can thrive. Many countries have reformed the regulatory environment. Over the past decade business registration procedures on the whole have been simplified around the world and the number of days and procedures needed to start a business has decreased. However, continuing efforts are needed to streamline and simplify other administrative procedures, such as the time required to file taxes.
- UNCTAD's business facilitation programme – the eRegulation and eRegistration systems – is a key instrument in the process to help countries streamline their business regulations. To date the Division has implemented 55 iterations of its online business facilitation platforms across 30 countries encompassing over 4,000 documented procedures and generating an 80 per cent average reduction in the administrative steps, forms and documents in beneficiary countries. The resultant impact has been remarkable. For instance, in Cameroon, one of the more recent beneficiaries of the programme, more than 12,000 businesses were formalized within a year, after the implementation of the eRegistrations system.
- Most recently, in light of the establishment of the SDGs, we try to focus our policy development on and technical assistance for work on the vulnerable groups, including women and migrants. These activities are carried out in collaboration with relevant UN agencies. But much more remains to be done.

The key issues to be discussed in this session are therefore the following:

- How to ensure that entrepreneurship promotion contributes to attaining the sustainable development goals?
- What are the most innovative solutions to build an effective ecosystem for 21st century entrepreneurs?
- How can UNCTAD further interact within the UN system and beyond to implement proposed recommendations contained in the General Assembly resolution on entrepreneurship for development?